

## Introduction

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The category of “performance” comprises rituals, festivals, literary works, public spectacles, sports, play, music, theatre productions, and other events, both ordinary and exceptional. For critics like semantic theorist Milton Singer, such performative acts serve as expressions of a broader cultural system, with each instance of performance delineating a frame within which particular cultural signs can be identified and interpreted. This concept of “framing”—a term popularized in relation to performance by anthropologist and linguist Gregory Bateson in the 1970s—is, for Bateson, a type of “meta-communication” through which actions can be interpreted according to the particular context out of which they arise. Performance is not only viewed as a series of emanations from a larger cultural system, however, but also as the very sight of cultural production. For Judith Butler, for instance, performance is not just an interpretive framework, but it is the site of identity formation—it is where gender, sex, and sexuality are constructed. The numerous approaches to performance studies contribute to a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary field that crosses boundaries in order to interpret and reinterpret traditional signs and concepts, allowing for the performance not only of dramatic or musical works, but of culture, nationality, gender, identity, and self.

The articles in *Studies in Slavic Cultures VII* reflect this diversity, and the varied approaches of the four pieces demonstrate possible entry points for engaging with performance as an intellectual topic. Katherine Bower’s article, entitled “The Three-Dimensional Heroine: The Intertextual Relationship between *Three Sisters* and *Hedda Gabler*,” is quite literally related to performance: it analyzes the commonalities between the work of two playwrights—Anton Chekhov and Henrik Ibsen. Her detailed and in-depth investigation of *Three Sisters* and *Hedda Gabler* allows for a nuanced understanding of the literary legacy Chekhov inherited from Ibsen, drawing comparisons between the three sisters of Chekhov’s play and Ibsen’s heroine.

Yuliya Ilchuk’s article, “Performing Hybrid Identity: the Editing History of Gogol’s *Večera na khutore bliz’ Dikan’ki* (1831-1832),”

moves the notion of performance from the stage to the individual. Ilchuk skillfully demonstrates the author's performance of identity by tracing the publication history of *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*, arguing that Gogol's idiomatic speech, "inaccuracies" of grammar, and use of Ukrainian expressions all belie his status as a fully bilingual author. The article illuminates the rich texture of Gogol's voice as an author, while also demonstrating how his performance of authorship was unacceptable to many contemporary editors.

In her article, "The Knight and the Lady: Performing Gender Identity in *Wiersze miłosne* by Jerzy Harasymowicz," Ewa Stańczyk continues the exploration of identity as performance but goes a step further, including the category of gender as a vital component of the concept. Stańczyk addresses the conventions of love poetry as exemplified in the work of Polish poet Jerzy Harasymowicz in order to understand how notions of masculinity and femininity can be constructed through stereotypical sets of binaries, including: passive/active, local/foreign, free/enslaved, and natural/ intellectual. Using an analysis of these binaries as a foundation for her article, Stańczyk makes a carefully reasoned and researched argument for the interdependence of travel, identity, and gender in Harasymowicz's *Love Poems*.

The volume comes full circle and returns to a more traditional conception of performance with the concluding article, "The Show Must Go On: Komissarzhevskaia's 1909 Production of Stanisław Przybyszewski's *Gody życia*," by Michael D. Johnson. Not only does Johnson concentrate on dramatic performance, but he deals specifically with the production history of an individual play—the performance within the performance. The many issues and difficulties that arise when realizing a play on-stage are carefully recorded in the article, and Johnson's article gives the reader a deeper understanding not only of the nature of the relationship between the work of Komissarzhevskaia and Przybyszewski, but of the important interactions between actor/actress, producer, playwright, and audience. Just as many different elements and factors contribute to a play's production, so are there many facets and categories of performance itself—a fact to which the seventh volume of *Studies in Slavic Cultures* attests.

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The theme of the eighth issue of *SISC* is MEMORY. The editors welcome submissions of graduate student work investigating literature, art, film, music, linguistics, or any other aspect of the topic in relation to Slavic cultures.